Land Use & Environmental Services
Code Enforcement Review & Customer Service Enhancement

Status Update to Board of County Commissioners

March 4, 2014

At the February 4, 2014 Board of County Commissioners meeting, the County Manager reported that the County will undertake six actions to address concerns expressed about the building permitting and inspection process. The following is a status update on each of these actions.

1. **Independent Review of Process**
   Hire an expert to conduct an independent review of the County's current process to identify potential inefficiencies and/or inconsistencies as it relates to plan review and inspections

   - A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) has been drafted, and staff are working with County Procurement to initiate the solicitation process no later than the first of next week.
   - It is anticipated that a consultant will be selected within the next 60 days.
   - Tentative Project Timeline: May – October 2014.

   [The City of Charlotte also has decided to have an independent review of its planning and development process. As a result, County and City staff have been working collaboratively in the drafting the RFQ.]

2. **Alternative Scheduling Option**
   Assess the feasibility and interest of offering an alternative scheduling option to customers that aligns inspection times to project size

   - The Building Development Commission (BDC) recently constituted a committee to work with LUESA staff in developing alternative scheduling options. The process will include engagement from industry stakeholders not represented on the BDC.

     The BDC consists of 13 industry representatives appointed by the Board of County Commissioners, with the charge of reviewing, advising and making recommendations to the Board and Department on Code Enforcement's operations.
   - Anticipated Completion: May 2014

3. **Customer Service Center**
   Establish a Customer Service Center for first-time and/or infrequent customers such as small business owners, new businesses and homeowners who may be unfamiliar with the process and need additional assistance

   - Staff are currently in the information gathering phase. To date, four (4) focus group meetings have been held with stakeholders from the industry to include, but not limited to, representatives from the construction and small business communities, and the Real Estate & Building Industry Coalition (REBIC).

     Input is also being solicited from homeowners who have recently gone through the permitting and inspection process to ensure their perspective is factored in the design and delivery of the Customer Service Center.
   - A Code Enforcement Outreach Coordinator has recently been hired. The incumbent is responsible for partnering with management in developing strategies for enhancing customer service for both frequent and infrequent customers.
   - Project Timeline: Phased rollout commencing in July/August 2014

4. **Quality Control Process**
   Create a quality control process for analyzing inspection data to make sure building codes are consistently being applied across all projects

   - Currently, staff are data mining, that is, identifying instances where there were multiple reviews or inspections for a given trade (e.g., plumbing, electrical, mechanical) and analyzing the data to determine if there were any inconsistencies to the building codes applied.
   - Anticipated Completion: May 2014

5. **Redesign Website**
   Continue current efforts in redesigning the website and as part of the process solicit input from both residents and industry representatives

   - This project will be done in conjunction with the County-wide website redesign.
   - Public Information has a three-phased project plan. Currently the department is reviewing and reorganizing current content. The actual redesign of pages is anticipated to occur in the Summer/Fall of this year.
   - Anticipated Completion: December 2014

6. **City/County Task Team**
   Establish City/County Task Team to look at processes across City and County, identifying all touch points and identifying opportunities for improved customer experience between the systems

   - County and City staff have met a couple times to discuss the scope of our respective independent reviews and the process for proceeding with getting community input and establishing a stakeholder group.
   - The plan is to hold several focus group sessions to ensure broad representation from the community (e.g., small-, medium-, and large-size businesses, the multi-family industry and homeowners).
   - The stakeholder group will serve in an advisory capacity, commenting on findings from the focus groups and any proposed recommendations about improving the process from a customer service perspective. Staff will contact the various industry groups and ask each to identify a representative.
   - Project Timeline: TBD; focus and stakeholder group selection process finalized within the next 30 – 60 days.

7. **Customer Service Survey**

   - LUESA contracts with Customer Service Solutions to administer a biennale customer satisfaction survey.
   - CSS is currently in the data collection phase and preliminary results are expected to be presented to the department in May 2014.
   - In the Fall 2014, CSS will conduct a customer service training based on the findings.